

# Determinants & Consequences of Parent-Adolescent Conflict

Florence Mueni: Probation Officer:

Office of the Vice President &  
Ministry of Home Affairs



## Problem statement

- Conflict between parents and adolescents may be a common aspect of their relationship, but for some families the **Quantity** and **Quality** of conflict becomes distressing, and is linked to adolescent internalising and externalising problems.

# Problem statement

- Paucity of research in the context of Kenyan families regarding the types of issues creating most frequent conflict between adolescents and their parents, its frequency and intensity, variation across families and strategies for coping.

# Study Objectives

- To identify the causes of parent-adolescent conflict.
- To examine the relationship between the gender of the adolescent and frequency of conflicts with parents
- To describe the consequences of parent-adolescent conflict on the family.
- To identify strategies used by parents and adolescents in dealing with the conflicts

# Literature Review

- Adolescence is viewed as a period of transformation and reorganization in family relationships (Steinberg 1991)
- Prominent among these changes is the shift that occurs when teenage children begin to exercise increasing amounts of personal jurisdiction over their own behaviour.

# Literature Review

- Njau & Meme (1997) in a study on needs assessment for mother and daughter communication, reported that the conflicts mentioned by daughters were mainly due to parental restrictions on dating, socializing and dressing habits.
- The study also found out that there was lack of communication between parents and the children.

# Literature Review

- Csikszentmihalyi & Larson (1984) found that conflict between parents and adolescents is relatively frequent and intensity increases early and middle adolescence.

# Sample

## Nairobi- Public Secondary Schools

- 150 Adolescents ( Forms1-3 i.e 14-17 years)
- 30 parents
- 5 G & C teachers as key informants
- 1 Education Officer as a key informant

# Methods

- Stratified sampling of schools
- One school picked from each category.
- Simple Random sampling of respondents in the classroom
- Sampling Frame for PTA List for parents
- Self administered questionnaires

- **FINDINGS-ADOLESCENTS**

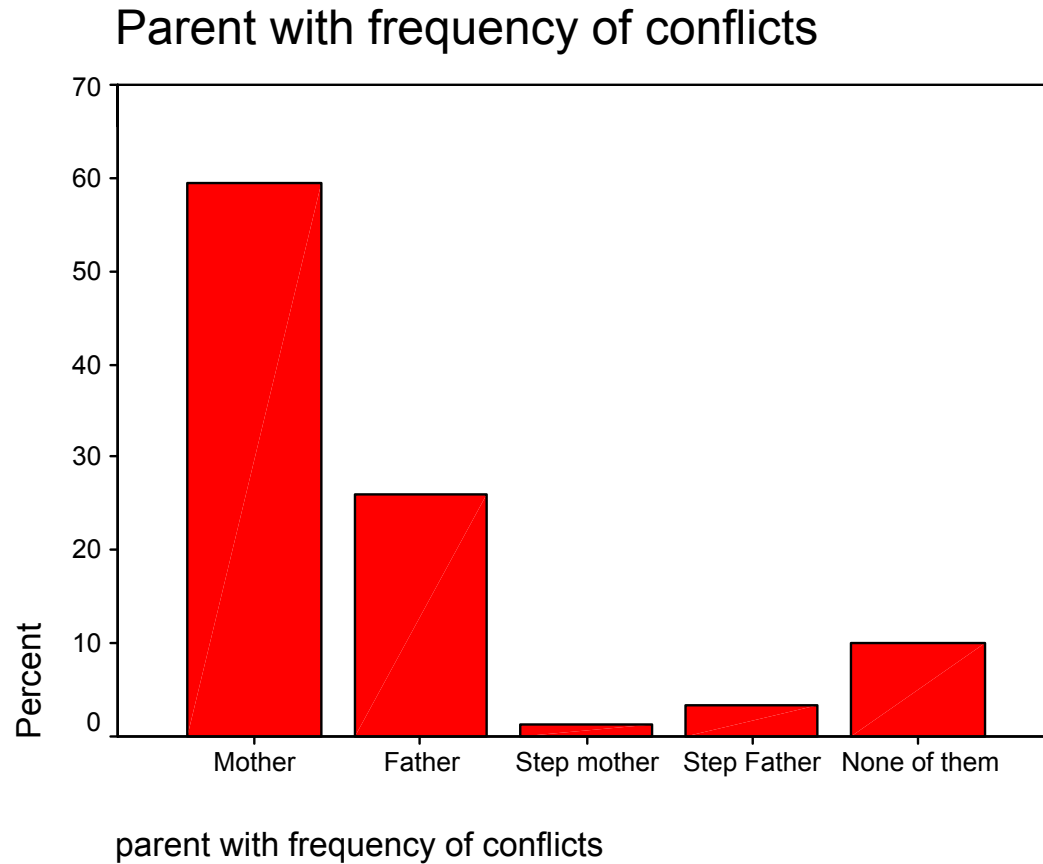
## Sources of conflict with parents according to adolescents

Source of conflict with Parents	Frequency	Percent
School Performance	26	17.3
Friends	24	16.0
Household Chores	21	14.0
Going out & Coming Late	15	10.0
Watching TV & Loud Music	11	7.3
Punishment & Discipline	11	7.3
Manner of Dressing	10	6.7
Career Choices	6	4.0
No Response	4	2.7
Total	150	100.0

# Frequency of Conflict with Parents

Frequency of Conflicts	Frequency	Percent
Often	18	12.0
Sometimes	58	38.7
Very Often	17	11.3
Never	57	38.0
Total	150	100.0

# Parent with whom the adolescent has frequent conflicts



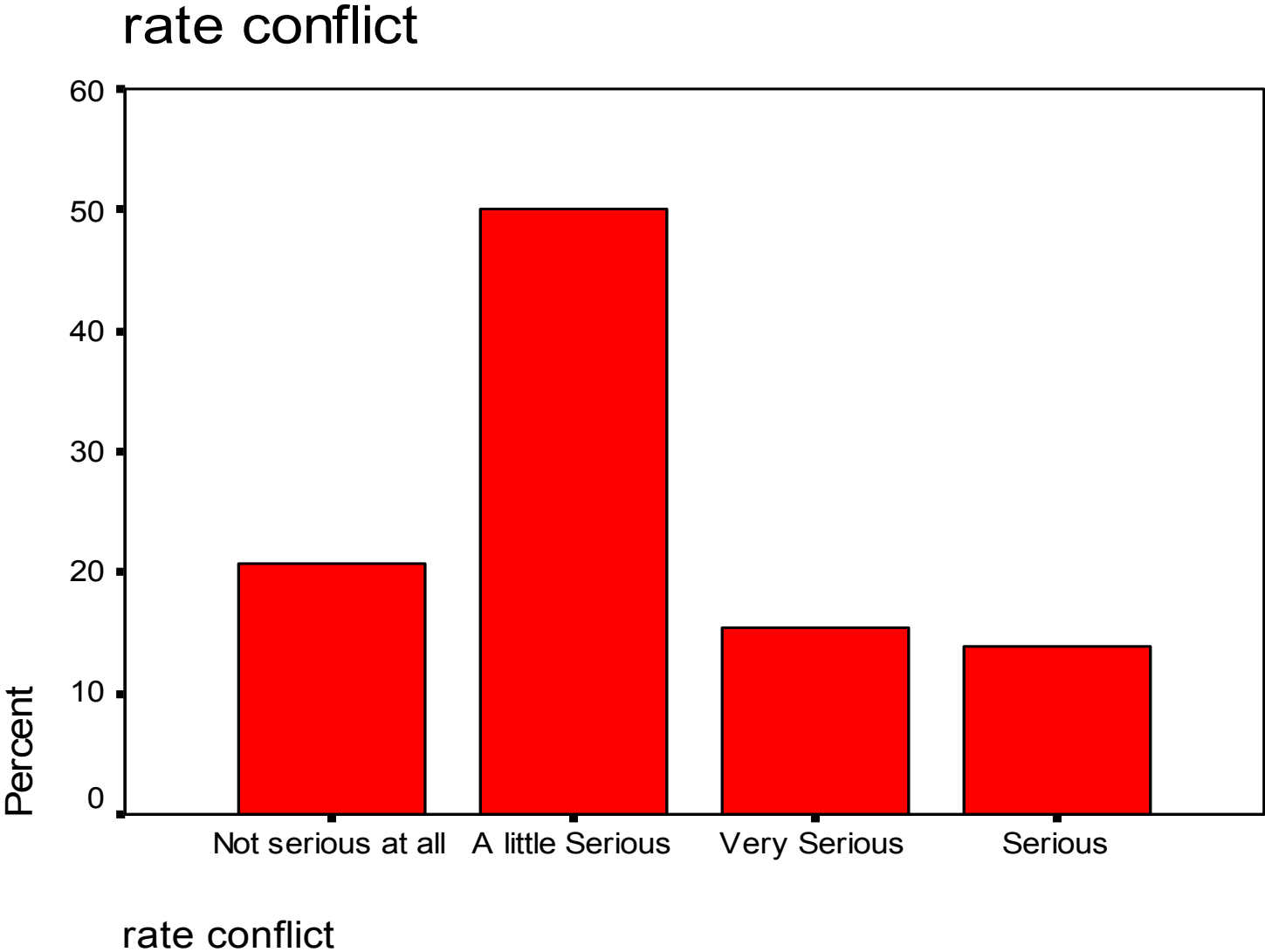
# Reasons for conflicting with mother

Mother is too strict-18.7%

Adolescent interacts more frequently with mother than father hence more conflicts with her 17.3%

She does not 'understand' the adolescent-10.0%

# Adolescents' rating of Conflicts with Parents



# Effects of conflicts on other siblings

Consequences of :Parent-Adolescent Conflict	Frequency	Percent
Family Unity is disrupted	36	24.0
They blame the adolescent & take sides with the parent	35	23.3
They blame the parent & take sides with the adolescent	18	12.0
They do not get involved in the conflict	13	8.7
Other family members are not affected	48	32.0
Total	150	100.0

# Adolescents who have contemplated running away from home

Contemplated running away from home	Frequency	Percent
Rarely	78	52.0
Sometimes	59	39.3
Often	6	4.0
All the time	7	4.7
Total	150	100.0

# Consequences of parent adolescent conflict on school performance

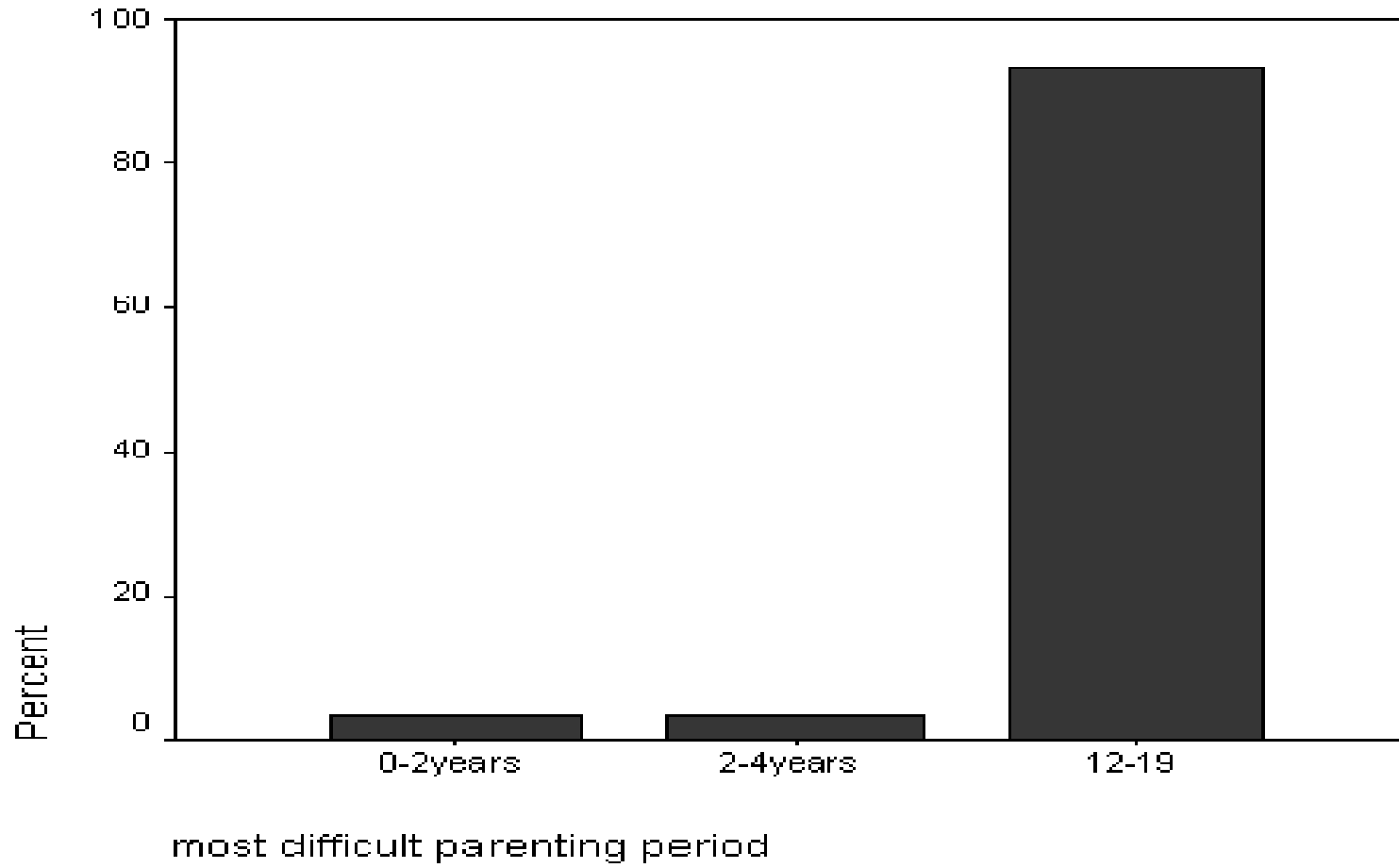
School Performance	Frequency	Percent
Rarely	56	37.3
Sometimes	55	36.7
Often	19	12.7
All the time	20	13.3
Total	150	100.0

# Strategies used by adolescents to deal with conflicts

Strategies	Frequency	Percent
Dialogue	49	32.7
Take responsibility & do not blame parents	20	13.3
Avoid talking to parents about the issue	53	35.3
Postpone talking until later	16	10.7
Seek help of a 3 <sup>rd</sup> party	7	4.7
Give in to parents wishes	5	3.3
Total	150	100.0

- FINDINGS-PARENTS

# The most difficult parenting period



# Source of conflicts with adolescents according to parents

Sources of Conflict with adolescents	Frequency	Percent
Friends	9	30.0
Watching T.V and loud music	8	26.7
School performance	1	3.3
Household chores	5	16.7
Going out and coming late	3	10.0
Financial demands	3	10.0
Dressing	1	3.3
Total	30	100.0

## Child with Frequency of Conflicts

Child with whom parent has frequent conflicts	Frequency	Percent
Boys	15	15.0
Girls	15	15.0
Total	30	100.0

# Consequences of parent adolescent conflict on the family

## On the marital relationship:

Yes- 66.7%

No- 33.3%

## On other family members

Yes - 70.0%

No -30.0%

# Consequences of parent adolescent conflict on the family

## **How other family members are affected by the conflicts**

- Communication breakdown in the family-33.3%
- They avoid being drawn into the conflicts-30.0%
- They blame the parent & take sides with the adolescent-23.3%

## **Effect of conflicts on adolescent's school performance** -100.0%

## Parents Strategies for managing conflict

1. Parent makes sure that they have the final word - **6.7%**
2. Postpone talking about the issue to a later time preferring to focus on something else instead - **23.3%**
3. Parent explains their position on the matter as clearly as possible as well as fully listening to the adolescent's point of view - **70.0%**

## DISCUSSION/SUMMARY

### **Issues (Determinants) of Conflict**

Parent-Adolescent conflict is mostly about:

- The type of friends that the adolescent hangs around with.
- School performance
- Going out & coming late
- d) Helping around the house,
- e) Television viewing and loud music.

# DISCUSSION/SUMMARY

- There is no relationship between the gender of the adolescent and frequency of conflicts with parents.
- Teens reported having frequent disagreements with mothers than fathers

# **The Adolescent:**

- Conflict between parents and their adolescents is predictive of a variety of adolescent problems namely;
- Contemplating running away from home
- Suicidal ideation
- Feelings of isolation from the family unit
- Drug use
- Poor performance in school
- Decreased relationship with parents

# Consequences of conflict on the whole family:

- Disruption of family cohesion & harmony
- Communication breakdown
- Coalition & alliances
- Marital disharmony ( stress in the marital relationship) hence poor parental wellbeing

- Parents satisfaction with their parenting is at a low point when their children are in their teenage years' (93.3%).

# Strategies used to deal with conflicts

## **ADOLESCENTS:**

- Avoidance was the preferred strategy by 35.3% of the adolescents when faced with conflicts
- This has implications on effective resolving and closure of these episodes.
- Unresolved conflict can leave the adolescent feeling distant hurt, angry, isolated and rejected.

# Strategies used to deal with conflicts

## **PARENTS:**

According to the study appeared to have better mechanisms of dealing with conflicts than their teenage children

# Recommendations

1. Counsellors should step in and give assistance to parents
2. Programmes for parents and adolescents should be set up social institutions like churches, schools.
3. Schools strengthen peer counselling clubs
4. Life skills training for the youth
5. Government funded counselling services to parents and adolescents

- The role of the extended family members should be re-emphasised.
- Government should enforce stringent measures to curb influx of negative messages that teenagers are receiving from other sources.

# Acknowledgements

Directorate of Personnel Department

Ministry of Home Affairs

Probation Department

Prof. O. Gakuru

M/s Lillian Owiti

**THANK YOU**